

REMARKS

Claims 1-34 are pending in the application, are rejected, and are at issue.

Applicants traverse the related objections to the drawings and specification, and rejection of claims 11, 12, 23 and 24 as indefinite. By this Amendment, these claims are amended to more clearly define the invention. With respect to antecedent basis in the specification and drawings, the Examiner's attention is directed to the description at page 9, line 14, through page 10, line 6, and drawing Fig. 7. Withdrawal of the rejection is requested.

Applicants traverse the rejection of claims 1-3, 6-9, 13-14, 18-21, 25-31 and 34 as anticipated by Larson U.S. Patent No. 5,815,557.

Independent claim 1 specifies a method of controlling a safe comprising providing an electronic lock for the safe through which a plurality of different types of transactions can be performed. A control unit is external to the safe and coupled to the electronic lock for continual communications between the control unit and the electronic lock. The control unit continually monitors the transactions with the electronic lock. Signals are received at the electronic lock from the control unit and the safe is controlled in response to these signals.

1 { Contrary to the statements made in the action, Larson does not disclose or suggest controlling a safe, or even the real estate lock box, in response to signals from a control unit.

Larson discloses transmitting information on authorized users to a lock box enabling the lock box to be opened by a particular user. The lock box is actually opened by a user accessing identification means 28 on the lock box. As such, the lock box is not controlled in response to signals from an external control unit, but rather from signals entered on the lock box, itself, by a

2 { user. Moreover, Larson does not disclose or suggest providing a control unit coupled to an electronic lock for continual communications between the control unit and the electronic lock and continually monitoring the transactions with the electronic lock. Therefore, independent claim 1 is not anticipated by Larson.

Claims 2, 3, 6 and 7 depend from claim 1 and are believed allowable for the same reasons therefor.

Independent claim 8 specifies receiving login information at a control unit external to the safe and enabling a user to select an open door option and providing signals from the control unit to the electronic lock in response to the selection of the open door option. As noted above, Larson uses an external control unit to send a list of authorized users to a lock box. The lock is actually operated by a user entering information at the lock box itself. Independent claim 8 is not anticipated for this reason in addition to the reasons discussed above relative to claim 1. Dependent claims 9 and 13-14 are likewise not anticipated.

Independent claim 18 specifies a method of controlling a safe including providing signals from a control unit external to a safe which are coupled to an electronic lock and the safe is unlocked in response to these signals. Claim 18 is believed allowable for the same reasons discussed above relative to claims 1 and, as are dependent claim 19-21, 25 and 26.

Independent claim 27 specifies an apparatus for controlling a safe comprising an electronic lock incorporated in the safe through which a plurality of different types of transactions can be performed. An input/output port is coupled to the electronic lock. A control unit external to the safe is coupled to the input/output port for continually monitoring the

transactions with the electronic lock. A control signal is received at the input/output port from the control unit for controlling the electronic lock.

3 { Contrary to the statements made in the action, claims 27-34 do not recite an apparatus used for practicing the method of claims 1-7. Nevertheless, Larson does not disclose or suggest an input/output port coupled to an electronic lock for connection to an external control unit which continually monitors transactions with the electronic lock and sends a control signal for controlling the electronic lock. Therefore, claim 27 and dependent claims 28-31 are not anticipated.

Independent claim 34 specifies a system for controlling a safe including an electronic lock means for controlling the safe and a control unit means external to the safe and coupled to input/output means for continually monitoring operation of the electronic lock and for providing signals to the electronic lock. Claim 34 is not anticipated for the same reasons discussed above relative to claim 27.

For the above reasons, claims 1-3, 6-9, 13-14, 18-21, 25-31 and 34 are not anticipated and withdrawal of the rejection is requested.

Claims 1-10, 13-22 and 25-34 are not anticipated by Henderson et al. U.S. Patent No. 4,914,732. The claims are generally discussed above relative to Larson.

Henderson et al. discloses an electronic lock system for a lock box. The lock box includes an electronic lock for providing access to a compartment. A "key", resembling a portable calculator, is used to enter key strokes or the like to selectively unlock the compartment. Particularly, key strokes or the like are entered on the key in order to arm the key. Once the key

is armed, then it is placed in proximity to the lock box which opens the compartment and communicates information between the devices.

The invention defined by the claims herein relates to a safe incorporating an electronic lock. The use and function of a safe are generally different from that of a lock box which is typically a small compartment for holding a house key. A realtor, or the like, rather than having a mechanical key, uses an electronic key. There is no communication between the electronic key and the lock box until such time as it is necessary to open the lock box and the communication is of short duration.

In accordance with the claimed invention, the lock is in a safe through which a plurality of different types of transactions can be performed. The control unit is coupled to the electronic lock for continual communications between the control unit and the electronic lock. The control unit continually monitors the transactions with the electronic lock. The safe is likewise controlled by signals received at the electronic lock from the control unit.

As noted above, Henderson et al. do not provide continual communications between the electronic key and the lock box. Communication is of short duration. Moreover, there is no continual monitoring of transactions with the electronic lock by the control unit. Instead, there is a brief transfer of information only after communication is established. The key disarms itself after a short time period.

Because Henderson et al. do not disclose each and every element of claims 1-10, 13-22, and 25-34, these claims are not anticipated by Henderson et al. Nor does Henderson et al. suggest the claimed invention. Indeed, Henderson et al. teaches away from the claimed

invention by providing only communication of short duration and only when necessary to open the lock box. Therefore, any obviousness rejection over Henderson et al. would also be improper.

Applicants traverse the rejection of claims 11, 12, 23 and 24 (applicants assume the reference to claim 44 in the opening sentence of paragraph 13 is in error) as obvious over Henderson et al. Claims 11 and 12 depend from claim 8. Claims 23 and 24 depend from claim 18. Dependent claims 8 and 18 are not obvious over Henderson et al. for the reasons discussed above. Therefore, the dependent claims are likewise not obvious.

For the above reasons, claims 11, 12, 23 and 24 are believed allowable and withdrawal of the rejection is requested.

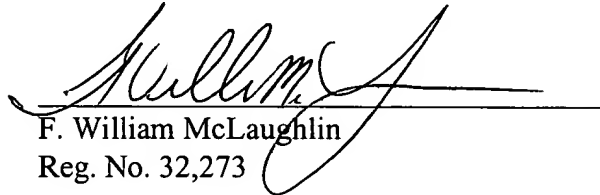
Applicants traverse the rejection of claims 4-5, 15-17 and 32-33 as obvious over Larson in view of Vanderschel U.S. Patent No. 5,349,345. Claims 4-5 depend from claim 1. Claims 15-16 depend from claim 8. Claims 32-33 depend from claim 27. The deficiencies with respect to Larson and these independent claims, as well as independent claim 17, are fully discussed above. Vanderschel does not disclose or suggest these deficiencies. Instead, Vanderschel is cited only for its use of encryption. Because the combination does not result in the claimed invention, there is no obviousness and the rejection is improper.

For the above reasons, claims 4-5, 15-17 and 32-33 are believed allowable and withdrawal of the rejection is requested.

Reconsideration of the application and allowance and passage to issue are
requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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